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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

1. Summary: Taiwan dailies gave extensive coverage and editorial reporting May 13 to the meeting between PFP Chairman James Soong and Chinese President Hu Jintao and President Chen Shui-bian's response to the meeting in a TV interview Thursday. Almost all Chinese-language newspapers in Taiwan reported on the Soong-Hu meeting on their front pages. The centrist "China Times" ran a banner headline that read: "Soong-Hu communique: [the statement of] 'two sides of [Taiwan] Strait, one China' [is used to] interpret the 1992 Consensus." The pro-unification "United Daily News" also headlined in its front page: "Soong-Hu meeting: 'two sides of [Taiwan] Strait, one China' and 'no use of force if [there is] no [Taiwan] independence.'" The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" focused on Chen's response to the Soong-Hu meeting in its front page, quoting Chen as saying that "China makes zero concession." A second story on the same page of the "Taiwan Daily" read: "The 1992 Consensus is 'two sides of [Taiwan] Strait, one China.'" The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, is the only Chinese-language daily that did not report on the Soong-Hu meeting on its front page. On its second page, however, the "Liberty Times" printed a banner headline that said: "Soong and Hu gang up and invent 'two sides of [Taiwan] Strait, one China,'" and the sub-headline read: "Both men met and reached a 6-point consensus, hoping to use the new term to define the 1992 Consensus and use it as a basis for the resumption of cross-strait talks."

2. President Chen's criticism of the results of the Soong-Hu meeting was reported in the first few pages of most dailies. The "Liberty Times" noted on its page two: "Bian: What's the use of visiting [China] if China does not make any concession?" A page-two story in the "United Daily News" headlined: "Bian: the six-point consensus of Soong and Hu will create new problems." A page-three news story of the "China Times" also said: "Bian criticizes Soong for violating their 10-point consensus."

3. In terms of editorials and commentaries, both the pro-independence "Liberty Times" and "Taiwan Daily" editorialized that Hu Jintao has joined hands with Lien and Soong to restrain and destroy Taiwan. A limited-circulation, pro-independence English-language "Taipei Times" editorial also said it is hard to find any substantive and innovative surprises in the Soong-Hu talks. A "United Daily News" editorial commented on Soong's China trip, saying Soong has failed to help build a bridge between Chen and Hu as the words "1992 Consensus" continued to remain in the six-point consensus reached between Soong and Hu. As a result, the editorial said, future relations between Soong and Chen will surely face more complicated tests. A "China Times" news analysis, however, gave a positive assessment of the Soong-Hu talks, saying Beijing has demonstrated some flexibility and the room for cross-strait reconciliation has thus increased. A separate "United Daily News" news analysis said traces of Washington's manipulation efforts are evident in the structure of interactions between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. End summary.

A) "Hu, Lien, Soong Join Forces to Constrain Taiwan; Even the Shadow of the Republic of China Disappears"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 800,000] editorialized (5/13):

". Whether it is the Lien-Hu press communique or the Soong-Hu conference communique, both blur Taiwan's sovereignty and further play the trick of promoting unification by economic interests. The bridge built by them leads to surrender. .

". James Soong's 'cooperation-with-the-communists' tour

is approaching the end. With the two united-front helpers of Lien Chan and Soong, China's ability to destroy Taiwan by the united-front tactic will definitely be strengthened. This will be a major trial for Taiwan moving toward a normalized nation. [Judging] from the implicit mutual understanding that Lien Chan and James Soong have with Hu Jintao, their common denominators with Hu are much larger than those with the people of Taiwan. If President Chen still wants to insist on Taiwan's sovereignty and security, he can no longer fantasize about using the Republic of China, which Lien and Soong dared not to mention [in the mainland], as the common denominator to seek reconciliation and co-existence with Lien and Soong, who are joining forces with the communists to constrain Taiwan. It is because Lien and Soong not only did not find a route favorable for Taiwan, but also paved the way for China to have a hand in Taiwan. Will Lien and Soong succeed in working with the communists against Taiwan or even selling out Taiwan? Will China succeed in using the Trojan Horse strategy to win unification by economic benefits? Will Taiwan's national identification be torn down and tilted toward China? Everyone is waiting to see what President Chen will do facing this historically crucial time. Whether he will fight against the fad of cooperating with the communists and the China fever or succumb to this adverse current and make preparations for a Bian-Hu meeting, all this involves the survival of the 23 million people in Taiwan and the protection of sovereignty."

B) "`Two Sides of the Strait, One China' Is Extension of `One-China Roof,' Soong Ignores Taiwan's Sovereign Status. Without Sovereignty How Can One Talk About Cross-Strait Equal-footing Negotiations? Lien, Soong Failed to Oppose 1992 Consensus During China Visits and Lost Taiwan People's Dignity'"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 150,000] commented in an editorial (5/13):

". James Soong said to resume negotiations on an equal footing based on the `Two Side of the Strait, One China' principle is an extension of his past proposal of the `one-China Roof' theory. There is nothing new about this. Under the `one-China' framework, it equals losing Taiwan's sovereignty and [gaining] a status not different from Hong Kong's. The so-called `Two Sides of the Strait, One China' is plainly a reproduction of `one country, two systems.' How can there be any equal sovereign footing or `resumption of negotiations on an equal basis' between the two sides across the Strait? James Soong's statement is self-deception. How can it be accepted by the majority of the Taiwan people? ."

C) "Soong-Hu Meeting an Anti-Climax"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (5/13):

"The supposed climax of People First Party (PFP) Chairman James Soong's trip to China took place yesterday, when he finally met with Chinese President Hu Jintao. Although many observers had assigned slightly more significance to Soong's meeting with Hu than the prior meeting between Hu and Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Lien Chan as a result of the 10-point consensus Soong had reached with President Chen Shui-bian, it is hard to find any substantive and innovative surprises in the Soong-Hu talks. .

"As for conducting substantive talks with Chinese officials, nothing they said had not been uttered before. At the core of all their speeches is still the `one China' principle and the so-called `1992 consensus' under which this principle is supposedly recognized. In other words, the fundamental roadblock preventing any progress in the cross-strait relationship remains. .

"Ironically, in repudiating Taiwan independence as an option, Soong went on to say that independence would only bring disaster and war. The problem is that these disasters and war could be averted if only China could learn to respect Taiwan's democracy and its right to self-determination. So, at the end of the day, Taiwan independence is not an option to some people only because Beijing had made it to."

D) "James Soong Fails to Build a Bridge between Chen Shui-bian and Hu Jintao"

The pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 600,000] editorialized (5/13):

"Hu Jintao has revealed his last card. The discourse on the positions of the two sides of the Strait agreed on between him and James Soong equals the answer he gives President Chen Shui-bian via this `envoy.' .

"There are two points about the position of the two sides of the Strait in the `meeting communiqu' released after the Soong-Hu meeting: `1992 Consensus' and `anti-Taiwan independence.' .

"The formation process of the `1992 Consensus' concept was quite circuitous, and now it has been summarized into the four words of `Yi Chung Ke Piao' (one China with each side giving its own interpretation), and it is generally recognized as the bottom line for interpretation. The `conference communiqu' this time preserves the four words of `Chiu Erh Kung Shih' (1992 Consensus), and it is already against Chen Shui-bian's expectations. ...

"...The Mainland Affairs Council has already declared that the so-called `two sides of the Strait, one China' is just another form of the packaging of the `one China principle syllogism' (there is only one China in the world, Mainland and Taiwan belong to the same China, and China's sovereignty and complete territory cannot be allowed to be split). This kind of response is not something James Soong expected.

". Hu Jintao's definition of the `1992 Consensus' was sealed in his welcoming remarks, and that is `insisting on realizing the 1992 Consensus, which is the one China principle.' This also limits the interpretation space for the `meeting communiqu.' Whether Chen Shui-bian will accept such an interpretation of `the contents of the 1992 meeting' will be a struggle.

"Now talking about `anti-Taiwan independence:' In the `press communiqu' issued between Lien and Hu, only the four words of `Fan Dui Tai Du' (opposition to Taiwan independence) was seen; but in the `conference communiqu' between Soong and Hu, about 130 words were used to handle this issue, and `name rectification,' `referendum,' and `the making of a new Constitution' were all defined as [movements of] `Taiwan independence.' A statement attracting more attention is that `as long as Taiwan does not show any possibility of proceeding toward independence, it will be effective to avoid cross-Strait military conflicts.' This is generally recognized as `no independence, no war,' but the opposition meaning to this is `if Taiwan wants to become independent, then there would be a war.' On this point, James Soong seems to be trying to find an interpretation beneficial to cross-Strait peace in Chinese Communist Party's `Anti-Secession Law.'"

"The block of words President Chen pays most attention to should be `[we] hope the Taiwan leader carries out tangibly the promise of `five noes.' This block of words is very likely to cause controversies in the country, as the deep-green supporters will think that James Soong asked Hu Jintao to endorse the `10-point consensus between Bian and Soong.'" Although James Soong has written the Feb 24 `10-point consensus between Bian and Soong' into history, this move is very likely to prevent the `Bian-Soong framework' from being sustained.

"[We can see] from observing conclusions from the Soong-Hu meeting, Hu is still adopting the strategy of `when hard being harder, when soft being softer.' The `10-point consensus between Bian and Soong' did not bring about prominent benefits, the four words of `Chiu Erh Kung Shih' still exists, and the relationship between Bian and Soong is certain to face more complicated tests. .

"For James Soong, the last possibility for him to turn around is his return to the country today, and if he keeps to the same direction then he is really walking down the road of no return; for Chen Shui-bian, if he keeps holding to James Soong, he would make the situation more difficult to be solved; now he has to turn around and find remedies inside the green camp, and if he cannot smooth over the internal conflicts inside the green camp, the cross-Strait policies will still be at a standstill.

"After all, before attempting to deal with cross-Strait relations, [Chen] has to handle and have good control of the cross-party and faction relations, and he especially has to lead the green camp to transformation."

E) "Beijing Demonstrates Flexibility; Room for [Cross-Strait] Reconciliation Increases"

Journalist Wang Chuo-chung noted in a news analysis of the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] (5/13):

"Have the words 'two sides of the [Taiwan] Strait, one China' broken the long-term political standstill across the Taiwan Strait? This is a question many people feel like asking following the meeting between [PFP Chairman] James Soong and Chinese President Hu Jintao. In fact, the reason why Beijing showed interest in holding summits with Taiwan's opposition leaders is mainly because it wanted to mitigate the tensions across the Taiwan Strait triggered by China's passage of the Anti-Secession Law. Cross-Strait tensions were indeed alleviated following [KMT Chairman] Lien Chan's and Soong's China trips, but the political deadlock still remains, as evidenced by the DPP's unanimous attacks against the consensus reached between Lien, Soong and Hu. .

"Even though Taiwan's Pan-Blue camp's understanding of the contents of the '1992 Consensus' differs from that of Beijing's, the statement of 'two sides of the Strait, one China' cited in the Soong-Hu meeting indicated that to a certain extent, Beijing shares a tacit agreement with the Pan-Blue camp about 'one China, different interpretations.' For Beijing, the focus now remains whether or not the ruling DPP is willing to agree to 'one China under the Constitution.' In fact, anytime in the future if the DPP is willing to talk about 'one China,' that will mean it has provided a staircase for Beijing to step down, and Beijing will immediately agree to resume talks with Taiwan, which have been cut off for a long time.

"Some experts in Taiwan affairs analyzed that Hu's new policy goal toward Taiwan has shifted from anti-independence and push for unification to maintaining the status quo, and in terms of political definition for both sides of the Taiwan Strait, Hu tends to silently acknowledge the 'one China, different interpretations' advocated by the Pan-Blue camp. In the meantime, the experts believe that Hu has started to see President Chen Shui-bian as a rival that he can talk with rather than a target that he must attack. As a result, given the fact that Beijing is willing to tacitly consent to the existence of the Republic of China, the room for seeking reconciliation with Chen in the future has thus increased."

F) "The 10-Point Consensus [Announced by] Bian and Soong Emerges in the Conference Communiqué [between Soong and Hu]"

Journalists Yang Yu-wen and Lin Hsin-hui noted in a news analysis of the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 600,000] (5/13):

". It is noteworthy that traces of Washington's manipulation efforts are evident in the structure of [cross-Strait] interactions between the 'two sides of [Taiwan] Strait, one China' and 'no use of force if [there is] no independence.' Under the China-U.S. interaction framework, one China was [a concept] acknowledged by each side separately; namely, Beijing talks about the one China principle whereas Washington said it is a one China policy, and both sides have their own space to maneuver. Beijing sought to discuss the commitment of no Taiwan independence stated in the 10-point consensus announced by President Chen Shui-bian and Soong after having built the precondition [with the PFP] regarding 'two sides of [Taiwan] Strait, one China.' Then it used the communiqué issued by the PFP and Chinese Communist Party, in which both urge the Taiwan leaders to adhere to his [five no] pledge, as a condition and broach [the proposal of] 'no use of force if [there is] no independence.' Such a move meets Washington's policy direction and interests exactly and has predetermined [the possibility of] future dialogue between the authorities of both sides of the Taiwan Strait."

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